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ABSTRACT

Biographies of five men who dedicated their lives to fighting for the independence of India are presented. Mohandas K. Gandhi, born in 1869, spent his life in non-violent resistance to the many injustices being perpetrated against the poor and needy of India. Born in 1876, lawyer Mohammad Ali Jinnah was close in ideas, hope, and spirit to Gandhi. He promoted self-government for India and Hindu-Muslim unity. Jawaharlal Nehru was born in 1889. He also was attracted to Gandhi's ideas and worked for Indian independence. Nehru was Prime Minister of India for nearly 17 years. Another great freedom fighter was Subhas Chandra Bose, born in 1897. Bose resigned from a coveted Indian civil service position he had earned and dedicated his life to fighting for home rule. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, born in 1856, was regarded by the British rulers of India as the "father of Indian unrest." He selflessly served India, and everyone looked to him for political inspiration. Vallabhbhai Patel, born in 1875, is called India's "Iron Man" because of his strength of character and his great contribution to India's independence. (RM)

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FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF SOUTH ASIA: MOHANDAS K. GANDHI [and] MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAH [and] JAWAHARLAL NEHRU [and] SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE [and] BAL GANGADHAR TILAK [and] VALLABHBHAI PATEL

by

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FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF SOUTH ASIA

Mohandas K. Gandhi

On October 2, 1869, a third child was born into the family of Karamchand Gandhi, a wealthy and influential man. The child, a son named Mohandas, was destined to become one of South Asia's greatest freedom fighters.

Following the customs of his family, Mohandas was married at the age of 13, and his bride, Kasturba, was only 10. Mohandas graduated from high school when he was 18 and wanted to go abroad for further study, but the idea met strong resistence from his family. Mohandas convinced his mother and brother to let him go to England, but he could not get permission from the elders of his clan. None of his people had ever been abroad, and the authorities absolutely refused to give their consent.

Thinking hard about this controversy, Mohandas decided to go to England in spite of the threats and warnings. He decided there could be nothing wrong with seeking knowledge, even if you had to cross oceans to do it. In the autumn of 1887, Mohandas Gandhi arrived in London. Although he had come to England against the wishes of most of his community, he was determined to keep the vows he had made to his mother, not to touch wine, women, or meat.

Gandhi studied for three years in England, and returned to India in 1891 as a lawyer. He stayed in India for a short visit and was offered a job in South Africa. During the months Gandhi spent in Africa, he noticed that Indians there were treated as inferior to the white rulers. Gandhi fought this injustice as if it was an insult to the whole community, not as single incidents.

A bill presented to the legislature would deprive Indians in South Africa of their right to vote, and new laws were about to be enacted which would require everyone from Asia to be fingerprinted and carry registration papers, as if they were convicted criminals. A meeting of Indians was convened in South Africa to discuss the laws, and Gandhi made several proposals. Eventually he suggested that Indians not submit to the "Black Act" if it became law. Speaking to an attentive audience, Gandhi explained the results of following his suggestions: facing hardship and difficulties, courting extended imprisonment and excesses from the police. Each person at that historic meeting stood up, raised his or her hand, and took a solemn oath not to submit to the unjust laws.

The "Satyagraha" or "Non-Violent Resistance" movement was born.

After securing a guarantee of civil rights for Indians in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India to establish an ashram where he could put many of his social ideals into practice. People who joined the ashram agreed to observe vows of truth, non-violence, celibacy, refraining from stealing, keeping their possessions to a minimum, and controlling their appetites. Gandhi's decision to open the ashram to untouchables (people from the lowest occupations, who were shunned by other groups), caused turmoil among the members of his ashram, but Gandhi insisted on granting dignity to all human beings.

At this time, a prosperous community of white planters lived on vast estates in Bihar, growing indigo. Gandhi went to this area, and the people working on the estates told him about the hard conditions of their lives and work, and

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of the unfair wages they received. Gandhi listened patiently, but a court order demanded that he leave the district immediately. Gandhi knew the people's cause was a just one and that if he left no one would come forward to help organize their fight. He refused to obey the court's order to leave, was arrested and put on trial.

When news of Gandhi's arrest and trial reached higher authorities, who then realized how great Gandhi's influence with people was, the case was withdrawn. Gandhi then convinced the government and the planters to repay the tenants the amounts illegally taken from them.

In the summer of 1918, the British Government of India passed a law called the Rowlatt Act. Under this law, political cases could be tried without juries and the Government could jail political suspects indefinitely without a trial. Gandhi called for non-cooperation with the government, and the response was immense. More than 50,000 people from all parts of the country followed Gandhi's methods and went to jail in protest of the Rowlatt Act. The people of India, outraged by the Rowlatt Act, showed their resolve and determination to win their freedom, and jails were filled to overflowing.

Gandhi proposed a symbolic act which would involve even more people in the movement for freedom. From time immemorial, villagers along the long coast of India have viewed salt as one of nature's gifts which they gathered from the waters of the ocean and dried in the sun. In order to generate revenue, the British Government in India taxed the sale of salt and declared it illegal to make salt. Gandhi resolved to perform the very first act of civil disobedience against the salt tax laws.

On the 12th of March, 1930, Gandhi set out from Ahmedabad, near India's west coast, to walk to Dandi, 200 miles away on the eastern coast. He was accompanied by a group of 79 disciplined followers, or "satyagrahis," people devoted to truth, non-violence, and the justice of their cause. As the group walked across India, their numbers swelled as thousands joined the march.

On the morning of April 6, after a night of fasting and prayer, Gandhi's followers bathed in the sea at Dandi. Then Gandhi bent down and gathered a handful of salt. This motion was the symbol for thousands of people. Everywhere within reach of the sea, people silently gathered salt and purposefully disobeyed the salt tax laws.

Gandhi was eventually arrested, but his unique form of non-violent rebellion could not be suppressed. People endured beatings, harrassment and imprisonment; some even died, but the freedom fighters refused to give up their non-violent fight and steadfastly refrained from retaliatory violence.

In August 1942, the All India Congress Committee, a political organization involved in gaining Indian independence, passed the "Quit India" resolution, demanding total independence from Britain. Overnight, the government responded; Gandhi and many of the other leaders from all over India were arrested. Strikes and work stoppages and sporatic violence occurred everywhere, and the English Viceroy of India attributed the problems to Gandhi, claiming Gandhi had invited the violence. Gandhi was very upset at this suggestion, and wrote a series of lengthy letters to the viceroy, asking him to retract the statement. When this failed, Gandhi decided to undertake a fast against the unjust charges. Gandhi fasted for twenty-one days in February, 1943. It was a great ordeal, but he survived the fast.

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Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, was with him in jail and nursed him back to health. But her own health was failing, and she suffered two heart attacks. Gandhi tried to save her, but Kasturba grew worse and died peacefully in Gandhi's arms. A few weeks later, Gandhi became seriously ill with malaria. The Indian people demanded his immediate release, and the authorities, believing that Gandhi was near death, complied. Gandhi slowly regained his health.

Two months after Germany's surrender in 1945, the Labour Party came into power in Britain. One month later, the new British Prime Minister announced the plan for India's independence and her partition into two parts, a secular nation of India, and a Muslim nation of Pakistan. The Congress Party and the Muslim League, two of the main groups working for independence, accepted the plan.

Gandhi viewed the partition of India as a spiritual tragedy. With infinite sadness he said, "All India must accept Pakistan with loving resignation. We have no choice. Hindus must lead the way to a friendly settlement." The tensions between Hindus and Muslims continued to increase, however, leading to large-scale upheavals and bloodshed.

On January 30, Gandhi woke up after a midday nap, and met with some visitors. He left his room at 5:00 p.m. to go to a prayer meeting. As he passed along a cordoned-off path, accompanied by his grand-daughters, a youth came forward as if to seek Gandhi's blessings. The young man stood in front of Gandhi and suddenly fired three shots in quick succession. All the bullets hit Gandhi.

Gandhi fell, uttering the prayer, "Rama, Rama," and died.

In the words of his political ally and follower, Jawaharlal Nehru, "the light had gone out of our lives."

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FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF SOUTH ASIA

Mohammad Ali Jinnah

Mohammad Ali Jinnah was born in Karachi on December 25, 1876. He did well in school, where his outstanding talents were recognized early. He was still a teenager when his family sent him to London to study law. By the time he was 20 years old, Jinnah had become a lawyer.

When M. K. Gandhi returned to India in 1915 after his achievements in South Africa, Jinnah, already known as one of the leading lawyers in Bombay and as a leading Muslim, presided over the huge meeting of the citizens of Bombay to welcome Gandhi. On the speaker's platform, Jinnah was dressed in a fine European suit, and looked like a European aristocrat, while Gandhi was dressed in a dhoti, coat and turban, and looked like an Indian peasant. The two made a visible contrast, but from the speeches they made, it was clear that Gandhi and Jinnah were close in ideas, hope, and spirit.

Jinnah took a prominent part in the work of the Indian National Congress -- one of the largest organizations seeking Indian independence -- while maintaining his massive legal practice. In 1913, he joined the Muslim league, which had proclaimed its dual objectives of self-government for India and protecting and advancing the interests of Muslims in India. Soon Jinnah was elected President of the All-India Muslim League.

Like Gandhi, Jinnah's views of self-government and Hindu-Muslim unity were far in advance of most of the rest of his community. Jinnah was confident that with proper constitutional provisions, Muslim interests could be assured adequate protection in an independent India, and that deep Hindu-Muslim unity could be a reality. In December 1916, Jinnah negotiated a pact with the Congress Party which provided separate representation for Muslims in future government legislatures.

A passionate nationalist, Jinnah was a great believer in India's unity. He did not like the idea of Pakistan being a separate nation. He hoped that Hindus and Muslims could jointly take power after the British left, to share India equally as brothers. There were many other leaders, both Hindu and Muslim, who preferred to form two separate nations instead of two parts of one united India.

Jinnah was a close friend of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, another participant in India's fight for freedom. Both men were outspoken, vibrant leaders in the independence movement who believed in expressing their thoughts frankly and forcefully. After Tilak's death, the Congress Party turned more and more to Mahatma Gandhi for leadership. Jinnah admired Gandhi, but he did not agree with certain parts of the non-cooperation movement, ideas such as boycotting British-run schools and courts or refraining from wearing British-spun cloth to win Indian independence. Jinnah eventually parted company with the Congress Party and withdrew to set up a law practice in London. He lived in England until he was summoned back to India to lead the Independent Party in 1935, and became the president of the All India Muslim League.

In spite of many meetings between Jinnah, Gandhi and Nehru, few solutions to the country's political differences were found. Jinnah eventually became one of India's main advocates for the partition of India into two separate nations, India and Pakistan. The Muslim League and the Congress Party drifted apart.

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On August 14, 1947, Pakistan achieved her independence.

Jinnah was the first Governor-General of Pakistan, but died shortly after he took office. He had been suffering from cancer of the throat, a secret he had kept even from his doctors for years. This brave freedom fighter passed away in Karachi on the evening of September 11, 1948.

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FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF SOUTH ASIA

Jawaharlal Nehru

Nehru was born on November 14, 1889. His father, Motilal was delighted and named his son Jawaharlal, which means "jewel in the eyes of his parents." Jawaharlal was not sent to school like other Indian children his age, but was taught at home by governesses and tutors from England. When he was about 16 years old, Jawaharlal was sent to school in England. He got a degree there and became a lawyer even though he was more interested in science and politics, history and literature.

Jawaharlal Nehru viewed England as the birthplace of freedom, the home of the parliamentary system of government, and as a small nation which held great world power. Although he eventually fought hard to win his country's freedom from England, his love for England and admiration for many qualities of the English character never diminished.

Jawaharlal's homecoming from England in 1912 was celebrated with great rejoicing. He had been gone for seven years, from age 16 to age 23, and his parents were now anxious to have him get married. Most other families of Nehru's clan had not encouraged their daughters to adopt Western manners and education, so it ws difficult for Jawaharlal's family to find him an educated woman to marry. The famly chose a lovely, intelligent 16 year old named Kamala, and the two were married with lavish splendor. Kamala studied English with one of Jawaharlal's younger sisters, and Jawaharlal helped his wife with her studies. Kamala learned to speak English rapidly, and relaxed in the constantly changing life in the Nehru family home.

Jawaharlal gradually spent more and more of his time with politics. Like many other young men from all over India, Jawaharlal was attracted to Mohandas K. Gandhi's ideas. He liked Gandhi's non-cooperation program and became active in the Congress Party, one of the major groups working for Indian independence. Led by the young Jawaharlal, the famous Nehru family began to change the whole pattern of their lives. Cars, carriages and horses were sold, and the family turned to simpler living habits. Jawaharlal gave up his career as a lawyer and turned his full resources to fighting for India's freedom.

Toward the end of 1917, Kamala and Jawaharlal Nehru had a baby girl. They named this child Indira Priyadarshani. When she grew up she became prime minister of India as her father had been before her.

At the annual session of the Congress Party in 1920, "Satyagraha" or "non-violent non-cooperation" was adopted as the official policy for the proper way to fight for Indian independence. Freedom fighters would break carefully chosen laws and go to jail to underline their belief that Britain did not have the authority to rule India. Writing his autobiography in prison some years later, Jawaharlal describes the strong emotions sweeping India at this time:

> "Most of us who worked for the Congress program lived in a kind of intoxication during the year 1921. We were full of excitement and optimism and a buoyant enthusiasm. Above all we had a sense of freedom and pride in that freedom. We said what we felt and shouted it from the house-tops. What

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did we care for the consequences? Prison? We looked forward to it. It would help our cause further."

In December 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru succeeded his father Motilal as the president of the Indian National Congress, making him one of the most important leaders in India at the time. Under Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership, the Working Committee of the Congress Party passed a resolution making January 26 Independence Day. The first Independence Day, in 1930, was greeted enthusiastically by people all over India, and large gatherings took this solemn pledge:

> "We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities for growth. We believe also that if any government deprives the people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have the further right to alter it and abolish it."

The Labor Party came into power in England in 1946. This group was more sympathetic toward Indian hopes for independence than their predecessors had been. Soon, an Interm Government was formed in India, composed entirely of Indians. Early in 1947, the British Government released India to full freedom, and two new Dominions appeared on the map of the world: India and Pakistan. On August 15, 1947, India became an independent country, under a parliamentary system of government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first Prime Minister.

The battle for freedom, fought so long and with such heroism and self-sacrifice, had finally been won.

Jawaharlal Nehru remained Prime Minister of India for nearly 17 years. Like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru became a world figure, admired and respected throughout the world.

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FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF SOUTH ASIA

Subhas Chandra Bose

Subhas Chandra Bose was born in 1897 and gave evidence of great intellectual ability. He graduated from high school when he was 13, and was second in his class. He started college at Presidence College in Calcutta, but was not very interested in his studies.

One day an extremely unpopular professor was dunked into a dirty gutter by three of his students who had covered their faces to conceal their identities. Bose was suspected of being one of the ringleaders, which was probably true, and he was expelled from the college.

Bose attended a different college the next year, and eventually graduated with distinction, again ranking second in his class. He then went to England to complete his education. He reached London in 1919 and went to Cambridge University. Bose's father hoped that his son would enter the Indian Civil Service, but Bose had only eight months to prepare for the crucial entrance examination. The ICS Exam was a very exacting test of scholarship and intelligence, where British, Scottish, Irish and Indian students met in stiff competition for a mere handful of posts.

There were two Indians among the students taking the exam in 1920. K. P. S. Menon, who became India's Ambassador to Russia, and Subhas Chandra Bose. Menon won first place, and Bose was fourth. Bose had taken the exam to show that he could pass it with distinction, but he did not intend to join the service. His aim was to help his country gain its freedom, so he resigned from the coveted ICS position he had earned, showing the world that his country's fight for freedom was more important to him than being a member of the glorious British Service. Nobody had ever resigned before, and the world of British bureaucracy was stunned. Bose's parents were both disappointed and proud of him, and so was India!

Subhas returned to India in 1921 and went straight to the home of Deshbandhu Chittranjan Das, a leading lawyer who had given up his practice to heed Gandhi's call. Das had abandoned the luxury and high living that usually went with his social position, and instead lived the life of a freedom fighter, going to jail to help win India's independence and becoming a leader in the non-cooperation movement in the Indian state of Bengal.

Bose was suddenly arrested in 1924 and deported to Burma for his revolutionary activities. Only the most threatening, outstanding revolutionary personalities had ever been deported. In the eyes of his countrymen, Bose attained national stature.

Bose's mentor died in 1925 and leadership fell to Subhas Chandra Bose, who was a young man of 28. Bose, now the hero of Indian youth, began preaching a message strikingly different from the non-violent methods supported by most of the other national leaders. Convinced that the British could not hold India for long, Bose suggested using conventional armed methods for gaining Indian independence.

After several years of intermittent jail sentences, Congress Party work and illness, Bose left the Congress Party and tried to find a new way to accomplish his mission of achieving Indian independence.

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During his travels abroad, Subhas had met the German and Italian leaders, Hitler and Mussolini, and had interested them in India's claim to freedom. When war broke out in September, 1939, he felt he had to find an international forum for ideas about India's independence, but before he could do anthing Bose was arrested and put in jail.

On November 19, 1940, Bose started a heroic "fast unto death." He declared that he would rather die than see his country continue in bondage. Before starting his fast, Bose addressed a letter to the Governor of Bengal, saying,

> "What greater solace can there be than the feeling that one has lived and died for a principle? What higher satisfaction can a man possess than the knowledge that his spirit will beget kindred spirits to carry on his unfinished task? What higher consummation can life attain than peaceful self-immolation at the altar of one's cause? Today I die so that India may live and may win freedom and glory."

Bose's stirring letter was printed by many newspapers and stirred his country as nothing before had. Daily reports from the jail indicated that Bose was growing weaker. Ultimately the British Government realized that they could not hold Bose much longer without serious danger to his life. On the 16th day of his fast, Bose was released, but the British did not intend to leave Bose free for long. Police followed him day and night; his letters were read. Subhas knew that unless he made the most of the short time he had, he might never get the chance to carry out his plan.

Bose pretended to be very weak from his fast, even calling doctors and ordering medicine, and he remained in complete seclusion. He grew a beard, memorized the Muslim daily prayers, and collected Afghan clothing. One night, Bose changed clothes and slipped out to catch a train to Peshawar on his way to a new role and a new destiny.

Bose's friends in Peshawar were delighted to see him in his new identity as a Muslim named Maulvi Ziauddin. Arrangements were made for him to travel to Kabul, Afghanistan, as one of the camel drivers in a caravan. Since "Ziauddin" did not know the regional language, he had to pretend to be a deaf-mute. Eight days after he had left his home in Calcutta, Bose reached Kabul in Afghanistan. The British did not discover that he had disappeared from Calcutta until Bose failed to come to a court appearance 11 days after his departure.

When "Ziauddin" the camel driver arrived in Kabul, he shaved off his beard, took off his baggy Afghan pants and long woolen coat, and returned to European clothes. Then he flew to Berlin with a German friend.

Once in Berlin, Bose established the "Free India" or "Azad Hind" Center, which became the headquarters of the free Indian movement in Europe. The Azad Hind Radio was attached to the Free India Center, and broadcast Indian news in several languages.

Bose formed the Indian National Army from Indian prisoners of war held in Germany. He trained the troops and led them in battle, and left Germany to take leadership of an army of Indian soldiers in Japan. The Japanese helped generously with funds, arms, and advice for the Indian National Army, which was over 30,000 strong.

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In October, Bose took a solemn oath at a public parade before his troops:

> "In the name of God, I take this sacred oath to liberate India and the thirty-eight crores of my countrymen. I, Subhas Chandra Bose will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life."

A Provisional Government was formed that day, and all the members of the cabinet took a similar vow.

Japanese and Indian National Army troops entered India on March 19, 1944. On April 21, Kohmia was captured and the fall of Imphas seemed close, but one disaster after another caused the Japanese and Indian forces to fall back with heavy losses of both men and arms.

After the U. S. atom bomb devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese surrendered to the Allied Forces in South-East Asia. With the Japanese surrender the Indian National Army's heroic struggles came to an end.

Subhas Chandra Rose died on his way to Tokyo, when his plane crashed on Formosa. A few days before his death, on August 15, 1945, Bose had challenged his country, saying,

> "Never falter in your faith in India's destiny. There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long."

Bose was correct. Precisely two years after these prophetic words, on August 15, 1947, India was free.

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Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, regarded by the British rulers of India as "the father of Indian unrest," was born on July 23, 1856. Tilak's father was a teacher in a primary school who supplemented the family income by writing textbooks for school children.

Tilak started school when he was five years old, and his exceptional abilities were soon apparent. He was especially good at mathematics, and could solve most problems without using paper and pencils. Much to his teachers' annoyance, he rarely needed to take notes to help him remember what he had learned.

Because Tilak showed such promise in school, an uncle decided to send him to college. After finishing high school, Tilak joined the Deccan College in Pune. Tilak was interested in developing a strong body, and spent several hours a day in the gymnasium, practicing various styles of wrestling, working out on horizontal bars, and swimming in addition to his class work.

Tilak's family were members of a community called the Chidpawan Brahmans. This group was among the most determined opponents of the British Government in India. Throughout his life, Tilak remained an ardent and active opponent to British power in India.

Inspired by an enthusiasm for service to their country, Tilak and two young college friends decided to devote themselves to education. The three started a private school called the New English School. The school was a success, and Tilak was able to collect enough money to start publishing a small journal. Tilak and his companions were repeatedly sent to jail for writing and publishing articles that were critical of the British government. After their release from prison, Tilak and his two friends were not as close as they had been before, and gradually the three drifted apart.

Tilak's popularity among people in his home state of Maharashtra increased. Many people did not like British inspired social reforms that aimed at modifying Indian society to parallel European patterns, and these people accepted Tilak as their leader, because he fought to protect their interests.

In 1896, Maharashtra was swept by famine and hundreds of people died. At Tilak's insistence, the Government opened jungle lands so hungry cattle could graze and refrained from collecting taxes from farmers whose crops had failed or had been destroyed.

The famine was followed by an epidemic that killed more than a hundred people each day in the city of Pune. The Government tried to keep the infected people segregated or quarantined, but this measure was very unpopular. Tilak severely criticized the actions of one particular government officer, a Mr. Rand, in his writings.

The epidemic began in March and ended when the monsoon rains began in June. In the meantime, Rand had become the most hated man in Pune. One evening Rand was shot as he returned home from a dinner party in honor of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

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The Government believed that the murder was the work of the Brahmin community of Pune, and Tilak was the undisputed leader of the group. A reward was offered for clues leading to the culprits. Tilak was brought to trial for the crime of sedition, because of the way he had continued to criticize the Government. He was found guilty, and was sentenced to eighteen months of rigorous imprisonment.

While Tilak was in jail, the Indian National Congress continued to grow in importance as an organization fighting for India's claim for self-determination. As soon as he was released from jail in 1896, Tilak joined the Congress, but there was quite a gap between the plans of the Moderates and the hopes of the younger generation of Congress members, the Extremists, who were led by Tilak.

In December 1907, the two groups of Congress came into open conflict. A leading lawyer from Bengal was proposed as the person to chair the meeting. Tilak opposed this move, and the meeting suddenly exploded in confusion. Tilak boldly stood on the speaker's platform, facing the audience with his arms folded across his chest. Moderates jumped up, calling for vengeance and clamoring for Tilak to be thrown off the platform. Gokhale, the leader of the Moderates, stood next to his opponent, Tilak, and flung both arms around Tilak to protect him from the enraged Moderates.

Tilak was not interested in seeking any protection. He remained standing still, as defiant as ever. Suddenly a shoe hit one Extremist in the face, bounced off, and hit another highly respected Extremist statesman. This insult enraged both Moderates and Extremists who began to fight in earnest. The Extremists had long sticks and they used them freely. In a short time, the battle had ended. The Moderates went home to nurse their bruises, while Tilak and his friends took charge of the Congress.

Tilak was arrested again for sedition in 1980. He was found guilty and was given a severe sentence -- six years "transportation," being sent to a work camp to live and work in primitive conditions. When asked if he had anything to say before the sentence was pronounced, Tilak spoke stirring words which touched the hearts of everyone, even his opponents:

> "All I wish to say is that in spite of the verdict of the jury, I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free."

Fifty years later, after India had attained independence, these words were inscribed on a marble slab outside the courthouse where Tilak was given the lengthy punishment.

The trial had made Tilak a nationally known leader. After this, Gokhale and the Moderates did not rule Congress - Tilak and his followers did.

Tilak was released from imprisonment in 1914, but was immediately prosecuted again for sedition. This time he was represented in court by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a famed lawyer of the Bombay Bar and a great leader in Congress and nationalist circles. Jinnah decided to defend Tilak because he was convinced that Tilak had been prosecuted for his strong views about Home Rule and Freedom for India. Thanks to Jinnah's legal brilliance, Tilak was acquitted by the High Court.

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Under Tilak's leadership, the 1916 session of Congress marked the beginning of a new era in India's political history, calling for definite steps to be made toward achieving Home Rule. Negotiations between the Congress and the Muslim League led to a scheme which assured the rights of the Muslim community in India, and formulated an agreement to hold separate electorates and constituencies for the sizeable Muslim minority in India. This agreement, called the Lucknow Pact after the city in which it was signed, was of great importance in forming the shape of India's future.

In his speech supporting the resolution on self-government initiated at the Lucknow Congress meeting, Tilak said:

> "I am glad to say that I have lived these ten years to see that we are united in this Congress, and we are going to put our voices and shoulders together to push on this scheme of self-government."

Tilak went to London in 1919 to bring a suit against a British writer, Sir Valentine Chirol, who had defamed Tilak in a book called Indian Unrest. Tilak lost the case. Losing the case was a great blow to Tilak; he felt his honor had not been defended, and this bothered him much more than the money he spent on the case. After this, Tilak's spirit was broken and he was never in good health.

When he returned to India, Tilak was viewed as a hero. A decade earlier he had been considered an extremist, but now everyone looked to him for political inspiration. Almost everyone viewed freedom as India's ultimate goal and people were not slow to recognize and honor the man who was among the first to call for India's freedom, to fight for independence and to pay the price of personal sacrifice in that cause.

On August 1, 1920, after a brief illness, Bal Gangadhar Tilak passed away, mourned by the land he had so selflessly served.

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FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF SOUTH ASIA

Vallabhbhai Patel

Vallabhbhai Patel was a man of great determination and purpose who did what he believed right, regardless of what other people thought. He is called India's "Iron Man" because of his strength of character and his great contributions toward India's independence.

Vallabhbhai Patel was born on October 31, 1875 in a village in the western state of Gujerat in India. His early education was limited because his parents were not wealthy and could not hire a tutor to teach him at home, nor could they afford to send him to an expensive top-quality school. He went to a village school when he was six years old, and did not graduate from high school until he was twenty-two. Although he often trailed behind younger students, Vallabhbhai pursued his studies diligently and eventually became a district lawyer.

Vallabhbhai had an older brother who was also a lawyer. Eventually the two brothers decided to go to England to advance their legal training. Vallabhbhai practiced law in India to support his brother's studies in England, then his brother returned to India and supported Vallabhbhai in England. Vallabhbhai returned home to an India that was growing dissatisfied with foreign rule.

M. K. Gandhi's fame had preceded him when he returned to India from Africa. Many people immediately accepted Gandhi as a great leader, but Patel was not immediately very impressed with him. Vallabhbhai Patel's attention was first favorably attracted to Gandhi when Gandhi went to the state of Bihar to aid the farmers who British planters were mercilessly exploiting. Vallabhbhai gradually became closer to Gandhi and eventually became a devoted follower of his, winning the leader's respect and affection.

By this time Vallabhbhai was a leading lawyer. With the rise in his professional standing and personal fortunes, Patel was able to devote more and more time to public life.

There was a severe famine in Gujerat in 1917 - 1918. The Government was requested not to require farmers to pay their annual land taxes. The farmers, too poor to pay the taxes, were being harassed by the tax collectors and were receiving little help from the government, so they appealed to Gandhi. Gandhi summoned Vallabhbhai, and the two men decided together to advise the farmers not to pay the taxes. Satyagraha, or passive non-cooperation, was first tried in India under Vallabhbhai Patel's leadership. Patel soon gave up his law practice to dedicate his full energies to helping Gandhi's efforts.

During India's non-cooperation movement, which began in 1920, Patel attained fame and importance throughout India. While Patel was as anxious as anyone to see India free, he viewed the British connection with India as bringing some benefits. He once said:

> "Whether we want to remain within the Empire or leave it depends entirely upon the British and their intentions. We consider it desirable to remain within the Empire if we can at the same time enjoy complete independence, but if that is not possible we shall, of course, be compelled to go out of the Empire."

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One of Patel's most significant triumphs in the Indian independence movement took place in Bardoli in 1928. Bardoli was a village in Gujerat state, where the Congress Party's non-payment of land tax program was to be tested. This program required organization, as the farmers had to be prepared to make sacrifices: they might suffer prosecution, be locked up in jails, or even lose their property.

The Government told the farmers that if the taxes were not paid, the law would take its course, but Patel came to the farmer's aid. He argued in court that the Government might have the right to collect taxes, but that it did not have the right to increase the tax rate arbitrarily, making the proposed tax increase or levy illegal. The anti-tax campaign at Bardoli gained national interest. Led by Vallabhbhai Patel, the farmers of Bardoli continued to refuse to pay taxes. Throughout the country there was widespread admiration for the non-payment plan. Eventually, the Government realized that the situation was getting out of hand, and they reduced the new tax rate. This was a great victory for the farmers of Bardoli, and of course, for Vallabhbhai Patel as well. Gandhi referred to him as Sardar (Leader) Patel after this, and the title immediately became popular.

Like thousands who followed Gandhi in India's freedom fight, Patel spent many years in jails. He did not complain, but his health deteriorated from the hardships of prison life. Ill-health, however, did not dampen Sardar Patel's enthusiasm for work. In 1947, an Interm Government was formed composed entirely of Indians, with Patel in charge of two important departments. Using these departments as his center of power, Patel played an important role in shaping the future of India.

When the Indian Dominion came into being on August 15, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister, and Sardar Patel was the first Deput (Vice) Prime Minister.

There were about 562 separate states in India at this time, ruled by princes. Even before independence, Sardar Patel had taken a great interest in these states, and had fostered independence movements in many of them. When India became free, Patel was in charge of the States Ministry. He decided that each of the Princely States should be encouraged to join the new Indian union. Patel attacked this project with enthusiasm, and within a few years almost all of the princes had agreed to merge their states with the nation of India.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel suffered a heart attack a few weeks after M. K. Gandhi's death, but he recovered and resumed the work he had begun. Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister of India, died on December 15, 1950, 40 months after India achieved her freedom, an achievement to which he had made major contributions.

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